

Ask. Listen. Believe.

Victims of domestic violence may be our clients, our co-workers, individuals providing services to our clients, and others that we interact with on a routine basis. Regardless of who they are, they need us to ask, listen and believe.

There are a number of indicators that might indicate someone is a victim of domestic violence, including: lots of injuries accompanied by stories about clumsiness, falling down stairs and running into doors; attempts to hide the injuries; no access to money, credit cards or transportation; having to 'ask' for permission from a partner before agreeing to anything; having little or no contact with family, friends or social networks; references to partner's temper without details and; minimizing concerns about injuries, activities or partner's temper. If you see these or other signs you can:

Ask.....

- *I'm worried about your safety because of what I've seen or heard. Are you all right?
- *If you are being hurt, what can I do to help/support you?
- *You are not to blame when someone chooses to hurt you.
- *You are not to blame for someone's abusive behavior.
- *You deserve to be treated with respect.
- *You and your children deserve a safe and happy life.
- *You are not alone. When you are ready there are people who want to help.

Listen.....

If someone discloses abuse to you, be mindful of your response. It will influence their decision about accepting support or help. Try the following:

- *Do not immediately question their feelings or responses to the abuse.
- *Control your response and stay calm – victims shut down if they see that someone can't handle their story.
- *Ask if they need something from you to stay safe. Let them know there are resources available and that you can help them find those resources.
- *Offer future support to a victim who says they don't want or need anything right now.

Believe.....

When someone discloses that they are a victim of domestic violence, they are taking a step that requires tremendous courage. Your belief in what they say, free of opinion or judgment, may be the greatest source of support they could possibly receive. However, if you find yourself in a position to provide concrete resources, here are some to be familiar with: